

Testimony for Raised Bill No. 426

An Act Concerning Geographic Information Systems Data Sharing

Prepared by: Richard Gallacher, GISP
GIS Coordinator
Town of Manchester

Date: March 21, 2012

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I'm Richard Gallacher, the GIS Coordinator for the Town of Manchester and I'm here today with my staff to support this bill. I suggest that in addition to digital GIS copies of service areas, easements and poles, that up-to-date street level line outage data be either sent directly to local EOC's or be made available for access and/or download from a centralized data center during an event.

GIS has been used at the Town of Manchester for over ten years and when accurate and clear information needs to be disseminated quickly to make fast and reliable decisions, there simply is not a better tool. People from all disciplines and experiences can easily interpret a map that, for example, displays sections of roads as red and determine that these are closed simply by looking at the map title.

An accurate and up to date pole layer is an invaluable resource to any municipality. Manchester uses its utility pole GIS data on a daily basis for managing and maintaining our streetlight and sign inventories. The Police Department uses the data for accidents surveys and reports and it is a critical layer for managing our fiber optic loop which connects all the town facilities including the regional EOC.

My staff and I support this bill because it would allow municipalities the best possible data to make those critical and fast decisions that are needed during an event. This was made especially evident during the two major weather events of 2011. Like so many other municipal workers, my staff and I spent days of rotating schedules at our regional EOC. The situation quickly became a serious safety issue when the Town's emergency responders needed to know the specific sections of roads that were inaccessible due to downed wires. The frustration intensified when the Town's road clearing crews had to wait for EOC managers to verify that the wires were not "live" and that it was safe to remove the trees so the road could be made open. Having accurate infrastructure and up-to-date street level line outage information would remedy many of the serious safety problems encountered by Connecticut municipalities during these last two weather events. This data would allow field crews to safely and quickly clear roads that would otherwise be inaccessible to emergency responders.

Not all towns in Connecticut have a GIS at their disposal but given the current GIS and web based mapping technologies making this type of critical data available to Connecticut EOC's is certainly a realistic and reasonable request where the return on investment would be seen state wide. Finally, passing this bill would also satisfy the recommendations presented in the *Report of the Two Storm Panel* document presented to Governor Malloy, specifically those described in Chapter Six – Use of Geographical Information Systems.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman and members of the committee.